

Mr. Speaker, I have always considered the time spent in this institution, the people's House, as one of the highest honors a person can be provided by this country. Each of us is elected by the people to be a Member. Each of us has an equal right to be here. But what we do here, what position or responsibilities that we have, we owe to each other.

Last Friday in the Ways and Means Committee while conducting a markup of a bill as a result of decisions made by members of the committee and by me as chairman, there was a breakdown of order and decorum. To reestablish order in the committee, I requested that staff place a call to the Sergeant at Arms. That decision, in my opinion, was proper and appropriate. A second decision to instruct staff to see if the Democrats that had occupied the library would go to room 1129, which is a room reserved for the Democrats for meetings and caucuses, and to enlist the support of the Capitol Police to do so if necessary, that decision, in the words of Norm Ornstein in a column today in Roll Call, was described as "just plain stupid." I agree with him.

Every Member has as much right to be here and to be heard as any other. In hindsight, calling the Sergeant at Arms for help in the committee room, I still believe, was good judgment. My instruction to use the Capitol Police, if necessary, in the library was not. I learned a very painful lesson on Friday. As Members, you deserve better judgment from me, and you will get it. Because of my poor judgment, those outside the House who want to trivialize, marginalize, and debase this institution were given an opportunity to do so. Because of my poor judgment, the stewardship of my party as the majority party in this House has been unfairly criticized.

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Because of my poor judgment, I became the focus of examination rather than the issues. The visions that each of us have for a better America, different as though they may be but equally entitled to be heard, were not focused on.

It has been said that our strengths are our weaknesses. Or as my mother would have put it, "When they were passing out moderation, you were hiding behind the door." I believe my intensity has served useful purposes, fixing problems and passing laws that otherwise may not have made it. But when one is charged and entrusted with responsibilities by you, my colleagues, as I have been, you deserve better. Moderation is required.

For the remainder of my time in this, the people's House, I want to rededicate my efforts to strengthening this institution as the embodiment of what is best about us. I need your help and I invite it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond in a positive way, and I make a parliamentary inquiry. Would this be the proper time to ask whether my privilege of the House motion could be heard?

The SPEAKER. The Chair will continue to take that timing under advisement.

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to speak out of order.)

RESPONSE TO QUESTION OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, I first want to thank the chairman of my committee for what had to be a very difficult task for him in coming before this august body and expressing regret for poor judgment. All of us at some time or the other have had poor judgment, and it is always difficult for us, especially as politicians, to say publicly that we made a mistake.

The reason I asked to respond is because I know that each and every one of us love this body and recognize that we are privileged, if not blessed, to have the opportunity to represent the people of the United States of America. But whether or not it is a Thomas-Rangel dispute, a Republican-Democrat dispute, the only question that we have is that we leave this place in no worse shape than we inherited it. Each Congress tries to improve the quality of civility, the partnership, the working together, the mutual respect and saying, as my chairman said, that we all want a better America, indeed a better world.

But we have diversity in this country. It is our biggest strength, and to respect the American people, we have to respect each other. It is not a question of personality. We cannot afford to be personal about it. There has to be respect. Yes, the majority has the responsibility to lead and to get their legislation through, but the minority has the right to be respected, to be heard, and to know, in a timely fashion when that legislation is coming up, to know what is in the bill, to have time and to be able to use not the rules that we make up as we go along but the rules of civility that allowed this body to exist for over 200 years. These were not Republican rules. They were not Democratic rules. They were rules to say, notwithstanding your emotion, this will guide you for a better Congress and a better America.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that out of this, because our parents have always told us that out of the worst day of the worst situation, if you commit to it, you can find some good to come out of it. So do not look at it as being a Thomas-Rangel, Committee on Ways and Means issue. Let us look at this as being a House of Representatives issue. Let us see whether every committee and every Member can say that in this

House we have got to respect each other no matter how much we differ. We should try to believe that the best of us is to do the best job for our country.

Chairman THOMAS, I thank you for coming forward and giving us the opportunity to say can we not take this House to a higher level? Can we not go back home and make the people proud of us? And whether we win or lose in terms of legislation, whether we respect each other is what I think those that we leave this Congress to would respect us for. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to House Resolution 326 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2799.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2799) making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes, with Mr. HASTINGS of Washington in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, the amendment by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) had been disposed of by a point of order.

SEQUENTIAL VOTES POSTPONED IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed in the following order: the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE), the amendment offered by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HOSTETTLER), amendment No. 1 offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) and the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH).

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. The remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. OSE

The CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the ayes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.